

Review by [Matthew Turner](#) 24/10/2008

### **London Film Festival**

9pm, Saturday 25th October 2008, Odeon West End 1

6.15pm, Tuesday 28th October 2008, Genesis

**Four** out of **Five** stars

Running time: **114** mins

**An entertaining, energetic and frequently offbeat biopic with a superb cast and a terrific central performance by Con O'Neill.**

### **What's it all about?**

Written and directed by Nick Moran (based on his play), **Telstar** tells the story of British songwriter and music producer Joe Meek (Con O'Neill), whose ground-breaking recording techniques and otherworldly pop records made him the premier independent pop producer in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The film skips Meek's childhood and instead takes us from the beginning of his partnership with songwriter Geoff Goddard (Tom Burke) in 1961 to the bizarre circumstances of his death in 1967.

As with the play, the majority of the film takes place in Meek's makeshift recording studio, above a leather goods shop on the Holloway Road. Aside from his fiery temper and bizarre eccentricities, **Telstar** also explores Meek's homosexuality, most notably through his obsession with peroxide recording artist Heinz (JJ Feild).

### **The Good**

Moran has assembled a terrific cast that includes the likes of James Corden (as drummer Clem Cattini), Kevin Spacey (as financial backer Major Banks), Pam Ferris (as Meek's long-suffering landlady, Mrs Shenton), Ralf Little (as Chas Hodges, later of Chas and Dave) and Justin Hawkins as Screaming Lord Sutch, as well as several cameos by many of the musicians featured in the film. [The music](#) sequences are hugely entertaining and strikingly original, particularly during the signature track, **Telstar**.

Con O'Neill is a veritable tour de force as Meek, his oddly strangled voice and manic behaviour clearly suggesting that there's some sort of link between genius and borderline insanity. In addition, Moran maintains a frenetic pace that works surprisingly well, even if you're never quite sure how much time is passing.

### **The Bad**

It's fair to say that the chaotic approach occasionally becomes a little frustrating, as it prevents us from really getting to know the characters. In addition, it suffers from too many Quantum Leap-type moments (e.g. rejecting a "popular beat combo from Liverpool", turning away [Tom Jones](#), etc.).

### **Worth seeing?**

Telstar is a hugely entertaining musical biopic with terrific performances and **great music sequences. Recommended.**